



Record Numbers Received into the Church at Easter

Throughout the diocese more than 325 people were received into the Church at Easter Vigil Masses in over 50 parishes.

The increase was part of a nationwide trend with the total number of new Catholics in England and Wales up by a fifth compared with last year. On Sunday 1 March, our candidates took part with sponsors, families and friends, in a Rite of Election service in the Cathedral. They were "sent forth" by Bishop Thomas to prepare prayerfully in parish RCIA groups to celebrate the Sacraments of Initiation at Easter.

In February, at Our Lady of Compassion, Upton Park, catechumens and candidates from Newham Deanery took part in a Rite of Signing in preparation for the Rite of Election. At the moment, Newham is the only Deanery in the Diocese to celebrate this Rite but it is hoped other Deaneries will do so in future years.



Bishop Thomas greeting candidates after the Rite of Election service

The Irish Traveller Community



Fr John Glynn with some of the Crays Hill site residents

The largest Traveller site in Britain, if not Europe, is in our diocese at Crays Hill, between Billericay and Wickford. Part of the site is legally occupied (some 40- 50 families) but on adjacent Dale Farm (86 families) the Travellers have been consistently refused planning permission. Basildon District Council claims the site is Green Belt land, although when the Travellers bought it seven years ago it was being used as a scrap yard. Now the Council has told them they must go – but they have nowhere to go, as there are no sites available. Many of them know only too well the trauma of eviction,

and are terrified it will happen again. Their education and health needs are difficult to meet when on the road – the majority do not read or write and they have the shortest life expectancy of any group in Britain. But their Catholic faith, while sometimes bordering on the superstitious, is deeply rooted; their strong sense of family and warm hospitality is an example to us all. At Our Lady of Good Counsel parish in Wickford, they feel a sense of belonging; four of them are ministers of Holy Communion.

Please pray for a just and peaceful resolution of their dilemma.

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